Page 17, line 9: Delete "looping";

Page 17, line 10: Delete "LAR" and replace with -- LSR -;

Page 17, line 13: Add -- a -- after "unless"; and Delete "LAR" and replace with -- LSR -;

Page 17, line 17: Add -- (Lsm) -- after "message";

Page 17, line 18: Delete "that is";

Page 17, line 19: Add -- (Lsm) - after message;

Page 17, line 20: Add -- LSR -- after "router".

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please add new claims 2-13 as follows:

--2. (New) A method for avoiding routing loops from forming when a node of a subtree is grafted to a MPLS tree, comprising the steps of:

a) receiving a label binding message at said node, said label binding including a label and a forwarding equivalency class (FEC);

b) if a label mapping request for the same FEC was not previously received at said node, sending a label splicing message (Lsm) towards the root of said MPLS tree along a labelled path;

c) generating a splice acknowledgement message (ACK) by said root node in response to said Lsm;

d) declaring loop-free and accepting said binding if said node is not waiting for a previous ACK corresponding to a previously received Lsm and said ACK returns to said node on the same said labelled path; and

e) informing all member nodes said subtree was grafted to said MPLS tree.

3. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein said MPLS tree comprises a unidirectional shared tree.

4. (New) The method of Claim 3, wherein said root of said unidirectional shared tree comprises an ingress node of said unidirectional shared tree if the core node is not included in said unidirectional shared tree.

5. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein said MPLS tree comprises a source tree.

6. (New) The method of Claim 5, wherein said root of said source tree comprises an ingress node of said source tree.

7. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein said MPLS tree comprises a bidirectional shared tree.

8. (New) The method of Claim 7, wherein said root of said bidirectional shared tree comprises the node closest to the core if said core node is not included in said bidirectional shared tree.

9. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein said MPLS tree comprises a multipoint to point tree.

10. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein said MPLS tree comprises a point to multipoint tree.

11. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein, whenever there is a label mapping request for same said FEC at said node, the following substeps are performed after step (a):

- merging label mapping requests; and
- stop forwarding said Lsm.

12. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein, if said ACK is not received back by said node while said node